

LEARNING TO LEAD

ABOUT K&G MANUFACTURING CO. K&G Manufacturing in Faribault, a machine shop with over 75 years of experience in the industry, sent members of its leadership team to participate in the program because developing leaders became just as important to them as product development.

THE CHALLENGE. Under the guidance of Enterprise Minnesota's business growth consultant Abbey Hellickson, Learning to Lead is a series of workshops that shows manufacturers how improving company leadership will better equip them to compete and grow in the difficult workforce market. Enterprise Minnesota is the official representative of the MEP National Network™ in Minnesota. Companies participate in the program either through referral or from intentional conversations Enterprise Minnesota business developers have with company leadership that suggests the program might be a good fit.

"Enterprise Minnesota focused on building a program around the concept of leadership because of the challenges manufacturing companies have voiced in terms of attracting and retaining talent," Hellickson says. "Research proves the better-quality leaders we have, the stronger recruitment and retention is within the company and, therefore, the company as a whole is stronger."

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. "The environment Abbey Hellickson created with Learning to Lead was extremely interactive," says Brad Holloway, program manager at K&G. "It forced participants to communicate with each other and learn different communication styles."

The Social Style model also encouraged Chad Bolton, a maintenance manager with K&G, to consider how his behavioral style and preferences contribute to leadership effectiveness. "When we learned about Social Styles, I realized my biggest challenge was with myself," Bolton says. "Now that I understand how to express myself and share my ideas, I can get more involved in making K&G successful. Our management team listens better now. This class was the start of that change."

The Action Plan portion of Learning to Lead helped K&G implement an IDEAS (Initiative for Developing Excellence and Success) Team that continues to make on-going progress within the company.

K&G will continue to send employees to future Learning to Lead sessions. The information and knowledge shared in the program goes hand-in-hand with creating an involved and empowered workforce, Bolton says. "The workplace can't treat people like a number. Everybody has to be part of the company. It doesn't matter how much you make or what position you are in; we all need to empower each other and have input."

"While hitting the numbers is all well and good, we can't lose track of developing leaders and investing in the culture of a positive work environment and continuous improvement. Today's society challenges us to have an environment of learning, where new employees can be trained and have an opportunity to succeed. Learning to Lead helped us do just that."

-Mike Jensen, President

RESULTS



\$375,000 in retained sales



\$85,000 cost savings in labor, materials and investment



\$60,000 investment in workforce practices and employee skills

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